

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

USMISSION USNATO

AMCONSUL GOTEBOG BY POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 STOCKHOLM 0396

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, SW

SUBJECT: SWEDEN: OUTLOOK FOR 1977

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. THE CLOSE OF THE "FIRST 100 DAYS" OF THE FALLDIN GOVERNMENT IN SWEDEN HAS PROVOKED A GOOD DEAL OF SUM-TOTALLING AND OUTLOOK-ASSESSING. OUTSIDERS HAVE EXPRESSED SOME SURPRISE THAT AFTER 44 YEARS OF SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT, THE NON-SOCIALIST COALITION HAS EFFECTED SO LITTLE CHANGE. KNOWLEDGEABLE SWEDES HAVE NOT BEEN SURPRISED, KNOWING HOW REMARKABLY BROAD THE POLITICAL CONSENSUS IS IN SWEDEN. SWEDISH ATTENTION HAS BEEN FOCUSSED RATHER--AND IN AN INCREASINGLY MELANCHOLY WAY--ON THE DIFFICULTIES AHEAD IN 1977 FOR THEIR
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FINELY-TUNED ECONOMY. LOOKING TO THE YEAR AHEAD, THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL COPE HANDILY ENOUGH WITH ITS POLITICAL CHALLENGES, BUT WE BELIEVE SUCCESS FOR EVERYONE IN 1977 WILL BE MEASURED PREDOMINATELY BY HOW WELL THE ECONOMY DOES. THIS PREOCCUPATION SHOULD KEEP THE GOVERNMENT TURNED INWARD--ITS NATURAL INCLINATION IN ANY EVENT, ESPECIALLY AS COMPARED WITH THE PREDECESSOR

GOVERNMENT UNDER PALME--AND SHOULD SERVE TO BROADEN
THE AREAS OF POTENTIAL COOPERATION WITH THE US. END SUMMARY

2. THE SWEDISH PRESS MARKED THE CLOSE OF PRIME MINISTER
THORBJORN FALLDIN'S "FIRST 100 DAYS" WITH THE REQUISITE
ANALYSES, BUT NO EDUCATED OBSERVER WAS SURPRISED AT FINDING
FEW DIFFERENCES WITH THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PREDECESSOR--
WHETHER ONE SPEAKS OF THE BUDGET, OR FOREIGN POLICY, OR
DAY-TO-DAY MANAGEMENT OF GOVERNMENT. ON THE POLITICAL
SIDE, THE THREE-PARTY COALITION'S PRINCIPAL CHALLENGE
WAS TO LEARN TO RUN A THREE-PARTY COALITION: AND SINCE
SURVIVAL DEPENDED ON IT, THEY HAVE LEARNED FAST, AND
NO ONE EXPECTS THEM TO FAIL. ON THE ECONOMIC SIDE,
HOWEVER, FALLDIN AND HIS MINISTERS HAVE PROFESSED TO BE
SHOCKED BY THE DIRE STATE OF THE SWEDISH ECONOMY, AND
THERE IS PROBABLY A CORE OF TRUTH IN THEIR ASSERTION.
SOME PUNDITS HAVE SAID THAT IF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS HAD
TO PICK A TIME TO HAVE A VACATION FROM POWER, THE CURRENT
THREE-YEAR PERIOD, WITH ITS ECONOMIC HEADACHES, WAS
POSSIBLY THE IDEAL TIME. IN PRACTICE, THERE IS PROBABLY
RATHER LITTLE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHAT THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT
IS DOING ABOUT THE ECONOMY AND WHAT THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS
WOULD BE DOING IF THEY HAD STAYED IN. CERTAINLY THE
FALLDIN FORCES ARE APPROACHING THE COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS IN
A REALISTIC AND RESPONSIBLE WAY THUS FAR, AND WE SEE NO
CAUSE FOR UNDUE CONCERN ABOUT SWEDEN'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS.

3. THE FALLDIN GOVERNMENT'S FISCAL-1978 BUDGET PRESENTATION
(ANALYZED IN STOCKHOLM 0155) WAS NOT BASED ON SOME NEW
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APPROACH DIFFERENT FROM SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC IDEAS AND
CLOSER TO A US OR WEST GERMAN APPROACH. ONE PROMINENT
ECONOMIST SAID YOU NEEDED A MAGNIFYING GLASS TO FIND THE
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THIS BUDGET AND ONE THE SOCIAL
DEMOCRATS MIGHT HAVE SUBMITTED. ALL THE WELFARE ITEMS
WERE CONTINUED (SOME WERE EXPANDED), AND THE DECISION
FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO BORROW ABROAD WAS THE MOST RADICAL
DEPARTURE FROM THE PAST. THE FACT IS THAT TIME DID NOT
ALLOW THE WORKING OUT OF A NEW PHILOSOPHY, SO THE NEW
NON-SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT NECESSARILY BASED ITS WORK ON
THE SOCIALIST PRECEDENTS. DESPITE A CURRENT CLAMOR IN
THE PRESS ABOUT THE DANGER OF EXTREMELY HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT
(UNOFFICIAL FIGURES AS HIGH AS FIVE PERCENT ARE BEING
BANDIED ABOUT), THE BUDGET DEMONSTRATES THE FALLDIN
GOVERNMENT'S STEADY FOCUS ON MAINTAINING EMPLOYMENT. THIS
IN TURN SWINGS ATTENTION TO THE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT WAGE
SETTLEMENT TO BE WORKED OUT BY LABOR AND THE EMPLOYERS.
LABOR HAS LOST ITS FRIEND IN GOVERNMENT AND HAS HAD ITS
BACK UP AGAINST THE EMPLOYERS' RISING COMPLAINTS ABOUT

HIGH LABOR COSTS: THE UNIONS CHARGED BITTERLY THAT THE WORKERS WERE ASKED TO SHOULDER THE WHOLE BURDEN OF RESTORING SWEDEN'S COMPETITIVENESS IN WORLD MARKETS. MEANWHILE THERE HAVE BEEN MANY PRESS ITEMS ABOUT ACTUAL OR THREATENED LAYOFFS OR DISCHARGES, AND THE UNIONS--HIGHLY MISTRUSTFUL OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT ANYWAY--HAVE CHARGED FALLDIN WITH HAVING NO POLICY TO DEAL WITH UNEMPLOYMENT. THE RECRIMINATIONS ON ALL SIDES HAVE NOT MADE SOLUTIONS EASIER, NEEDLESS TO SAY. NEVERTHELESS, WE BELIEVE THE DEEPLY INGRAINED SWEDISH HABITS OF COMPROMISE AND COOPERATION--ESPECIALLY WHEN THE ECONOMIC SITUATION IS SO MANIFESTLY DIFFICULT--WILL EVENTUALLY PRODUCE A REASONABLE WAGE SETTLEMENT AND RESULT IN THE THREE SIDES--LABOR, MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNMENT--WORKING TOLERABLY WELL TOGETHER.

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USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS
AMCONSUL GOTEBOG UNN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 STOCKHOLM 0396

4. FALLDIN'S HOPES FOR MAINTAINING FULL EMPLOYMENT ARE BASED ON AN EXPANSIONARY FISCAL POLICY. HIS GOVERNMENT MUST BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE PESSIMISM IN THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY REGARDING PROBLEMS IN 1977--NOT ONLY THE EXCESSIVE

INVENTORIES STEMMING FROM THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS'
ANTI-UNEMPLOYMENT MEASURES, BUT DEEPER STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS
IN MANY IMPORTANT SECTIONS OF SWEDISH INDUSTRY. ALREADY
"SICK" COMPANIES LIKE THE NJA STEEL WORKS AND THE GOTA-
VERKEN SHIPYARDS HAVE BEEN GIVEN MASSIVE SUBSIDIES WHICH
PERMIT CONTINUED OPERATION (AND JOBS) BUT DO NOT GUARANTEE
THAT THE COMPANIES WILL BECOME PROFITABLE AGAIN. AND
RESTRUCTURING, AT LEAST IN THE INITIAL PHASES, MEANS A
DECLINE IN EMPLOYMENT, RAISING THAT SPECTER ONCE MORE.
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TIME AND AGAIN, THE OBSERVER OF SWEDISH ECONOMIC PROBLEMS
RUNS INTO THE CLICHE THAT "SWEDEN HAS PRICED ITSELF OUT
OF THE WORLD MARKET." THAT IS THE CHALLENGE THE FALLDIN
GOVERNMENT FACES IN THE THREE YEARS BEFORE THE NEXT
SCHEDULED ELECTIONS.

5. STILL AND ALL, FOR 1977, WE DO NOT BELIEVE SWEDEN
NEEDS TO BE OVERLY DISHEARTENED ABOUT THE ECONOMY.
ASSUMING THAT A RELATIVELY GOOD RECOVERY TAKES PLACE IN
THE US AND THE FRG--SOMETHING THE SWEDES ARE FERVENTLY
HOPING FOR, NEEDLESS TO SAY--SWEDEN SHOULD BE ABLE TO
REGAIN SOME OF THE GROUND REPORTEDLY LOST IN MAJOR MARKETS.
THE NEED TO BORROW ABROAD IS NOT TOO DISMAL A SIGN: THE
SWEDISH CREDIT RATING IS EXCELLENT. AND THE GOVERNMENT
CAN CERTAINLY COUNT ON STRONG COOPERATION FROM THE BUSINESS
COMMUNITY. IT IS CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT THE ECONOMY IS THE
AREA THAT FALLDIN AND HIS MINISTERS MUST WIN OR LOSE ON--
AND THEY CERTAINLY KNOW IT.

6. FORTUNATELY, THE DRAMA OF THE SWEDISH ECONOMY WILL BE
PLAYED OUT AGAINST A BACKDROP OF POLITICAL STABILITY.
THE CENTER, LIBERAL AND MODERATE PARTIES STILL DISAGREE
ON SEVERAL IMPORTANT QUESTIONS--ESPECIALLY NUCLEAR ENERGY
AND MILITARY SPENDING--BUT THEY ARE OBVIOUSLY LEARNING TO
WORK AS A TROIKA, AND WE SEE NO REASON TO THINK THE
COALITION WILL BREAK DOWN. NOR DO WE SEE ANY LIKELIHOOD
OF CHANGE IN PARTY LEADERS, ALL OF WHOM SEEM SECURE. BUT
WHILE WE SEE EVIDENCE THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT IS LEARNING
TO GOVERN SUCCESSFULLY, IT MUST RECKON WITH AN IMAGE OF
INACTIVITY OR LACK OF INITIATIVE. MANY SWEDES HAVE FELT
RELIEF THAT THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC ONWARD PROGRESS WAS
HALTED; BUT AFTER A WHILE THEY WILL BE EXPECTING THE NEW
GOVERNMENT TO OFFER A NEW PATH INSTEAD, AND SO FAR THIS
HAS NOT REALLY BEEN DONE. THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS, IN THEIR
UNFAMILIAR ROLE OF OPPOSITION, SO FAR HAVE BEEN OPPORTUNISTIC
AND STINGINGLY ACCUSATORY. PALME HAS BLISTERED FALLDIN
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REPEATEDLY FOR ALLEGEDLY DEFAULTING ON PROMISES ABOUT THE NUCLEAR ISSUE. AND IRONICALLY, PALME ATTACKED THE GOVERNMENT FOR PRESENTING AN OVERLY EXPANSIONARY BUDGET, SPEAKING UP FOR HIGHER TAXES, CUTS IN GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES AND REDUCED FOREIGN BORROWING. WITH SOME 50 PERCENT OF THE VOTE STILL BEHIND HIM (COUNTING HIS COMMUNIST ALLIES), PALME WILL SURELY MAINTAIN A SHAP SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PROFILE; BUT SOME OBSERVERS HOPE THAT AS HE BECOMES MORE ACCUSTOMED TO HIS NEW PLACE, HE WILL MOVE EVENTUALLY TO A MORE CONSTRUCTIVE STANCE.

7. AS REGARDS FOREIGN POLICY, THERE SEEMS TO BE LITTLE HEAT, OR EVEN INTEREST, EITHER WITHIN THE COALITION GOVERNMENT OR EVEN WITH THE OPPOSITION. ALL SIGNS ARE THAT FALLDIN PERSONALLY HAS VERY LITTLE INTEREST IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS OR TIME FOR IT; HE KNOWS THE ECONOMY IS CRUCIAL FOR HIM. WHILE FOREIGN MINISTER SODER IS STARTING TO DO SOME FOREIGN TRAVELING--AND THE GOVERNMENT HAS EXPRESSED INTEREST IN A POSSIBLE INVITATION FOR HER TO VISIT WASHINGTON--MOST OBSERVERS EXPECT FALLDIN HIMSELF TO DO LITTLE OR NO TRAVELING ABROAD. NORDIC AND WEST EUROPEAN TIES CONTINUE TO BE EMPHASIZED BY FOREIGN AFFAIRS TYPES, AND THE NEW GOVERNMENT HAS CONTINUED THE INTEREST IN AFRICA BEGUN BY PALME (MINISTER FOR AID ULLSTEN WILL VISIT EAST AFRICA IN FEBRUARY AND MRS. SODER PLANS AN AFRICAN TRIP IN THE FALL). DIFFERENCES AMONG COALITION MEMBERS--THE MODERATES WANT AID TO CUBA STOPPED IMMEDIATELY, THE LIBERALS TEND TO BE PRO-ISRAELI--HAVE BEEN CONTAINED OR RECONCILED, GENERALLY BY CONTINUING THE POLICIES OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS. IN FOREIGN POLICY, CONTINUITY WILL GO ON BEING THE MOST VISIBLE THING.

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8. IN THE MILITARY-SECURITY AREA, 1977 SHOULD SEE A SLIGHT IMPROVEMENT IN SWEDISH RESOLVE TO MAINTAIN A HIGH LEVEL OF DEFENSE READINESS. THE PROPOSED BUDGET CALLS FOR HIGHER DEFENSE SPENDING, REVERSING A FIVE-YEAR TREND OF DECREASED MILITARY CAPABILITY, AND THE SWEDISH MILITARY ARE DEMONSTRATING NOTICEABLY MORE CONFIDENCE IN THE NEW GOVERNMENT. UNDER THE PROPOSED BUDGET, THE NAVY SHOULD BE ABLE TO PROCURE NINE NEW MINESWEEPERS, THREE NACKEN SUBMARINES, CONTINUE THE PROGRAM FOR SIX NEW-TYPE A-17 SUBMARINES, REPLACE OLD TORPEDO BOATS WITH THE NEW JAGUAR, AND BEGIN EQUIPPING THE SPICA BOATS WITH SURFACE-TO-SURFACE MISSILES. THE ARMY WOULD PROCURE THE IMPROVED HAWK AND TOW MISSILE SYSTEM AND LIGHT AND MEDIUM
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HELICOPTTERS. ON THE NEGATIVE SIDE, AIR FORCE AND AIRCRAFT INDUSTRY SOURCES DO NOT BELIEVE THE PROPOSED BUDGET INCLUDES SUFFICIENT FUNDS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE B3LA LIGHT ATTACK AIRCRAFT. THE DECISION--LARGELY POLITICAL--ON THIS CONTROVERSIAL AIRPLANE HAD ALREADY BEEN POSTPONED UNTIL FALL; NOW ADDITIONAL FUNDS WILL ALSO HAVE TO BE VOTED, IF THE GOVERNMENT ELECTS TO PROCEED WITH THE PROGRAM. THOSE IN FAVOR OF B3LA DEVELOPMENT ARGUE THAT THE PLANE IS NOT ONLY NEEDED BY THE AIR FORCE FOR THE LATE 1980'S BUT IS ALSO ESSENTIAL TO SUSTAIN SAAB'S ENGINEERING DESIGN CAPABILITY FOR DEVELOPING ADVANCED FIGHTER AIRCRAFT FOR THE 1990'S.

9. THE FIELD OF ENERGY WILL CONTINUE TO PREOCCUPY THE FALLDIN GOVERNMENT THIS YEAR. THE NUCLEAR ENERGY QUESTION PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT PART IN FALLDIN'S ELECTORAL VICTORY AND HARDLY A DAY WILL PASS IN 1977 WITHOUT SOME PUBLIC REFERENCE TO THE GOVERNMENT'S ACTIVITIES IN THIS

CONTROVERSIAL AREA. AS A FIRST STEP IN "STOPPING SWEDEN'S MARCH INTO A NUCLEAR SOCIETY, "FALLDIN WILL PUSH THROUGH THE RIKSDAG HIS "CONDITIONS BILL" DEFINING CRITERIA (ON NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGEMENT AND FUEL REPROCESSING) WHICH THE POWER COMPANIES MUST MEET BY OCTOBER 1 IF THEY WANT TO CONTINUE BUILDING SEVERAL NEW PLANTS. FURTHER BASIC DECISIONS IN THE NUCLEAR IMBROGLIO AWAIT THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE RECENTLY APPOINTED ROYAL COMMISSION ON ENERGY, WHICH WILL REPORT IN THE SPRING OF 1978. FALLDIN HAS HINTED THAT IF THE RECOMMENDATIONS ARE UNACCEPTABLE TO HIM, HE WILL GO FOR A REFERENDUM. MEANWHILE, IN LINE WITH CAMPAIGN PROMISES, THE MAJOR EMPHASES IN THIS YEAR'S ENERGY EFFORT WILL BE ON THE MORE EFFICIENT USE OF ENERGY IN INDUSTRY AND HOUSING. THE ENERGY FIELD IS ONE WHICH OFFERS OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXTENSIVE US-SWEDISH COLLABORATION. (AS ONE EXAMPLE, THE SWEDES, WITH A HIGHER PER CAPITA GNP THAN OURS, GET BY WITH ONLY 60 PERCENT OF THE PER CAPITA ENERGY EXPENDITURE: MAYBE WE HAVE SOMETHING TO

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10. AS FOR US INTERESTS, PERHAPS MOST OF WHAT THE EMBASSY HAS TO SAY IN THAT REGARD SHOULD BE STATED IN THE ANNUAL ASSESSMENT. IN THIS PREVIEW OF 1977, AT LEAST IT MIGHT BE SAID THAT WE EXPECT THE RELATIVELY BETTER TREATMENT OF THE US IN THE SWEDISH MEDIA TO CONTINUE, AND THE GENERAL CLIMATE OF FRIENDLY RELATIONS SHOULD IMPROVE FURTHER UNDER THE NEW GOVERNMENTS IN EACH COUNTRY. THE IRRITATINGLY SELF-CONFIDENT PALME GOVERNMENT DOUND TIME TO INTEREST ITSELF IN MOST AREAS OF THE WORLD, BUT THE FALLDIN GOVERNMENT SHOWS EVERY SIGN OF CONCENTRATING INWARD. SOME ARE SAYING ALREADY THAT FALLDIN'S WORLD MAY INCLUDE EUROPE ON THE HORIZON, BUT FOR MOST PRACTICAL PURPOSES IT IS SWEDEN PLUS HER NORDIC NEIGHBORS. THIS IS AN EXAGGERATION, BUT THE PERIODS OF THE SWEDISH ECONOMY WILL SURELY SERVE IN 1977 TO HELP KEEP SWEDEN'S ATTENTION FOCUSED UPON HERSELF. THIS NOT ONLY MEANS LESS OPPORTUNITY FOR FRICTION WITH THE US, IT ALSO MEANS MORE IMPULSION TOWARDS SWEDISH COOPERATION WITH US IN A NUMBER OF AREAS.

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